Freedom Watch™

Citizens Project

THIS MONTH

- Community Conversation on Race
- Hate Crime Laws Under Attack
- Gay Teens Face Harassment at School
- Here Comes the Posse

INSIDE CP

Join us to celebrate Citizens Project's 7th Anniversary!

PRIMITIVO WINE BAR

28 S. Tejon
Sat., July 10 • 3-5 p.m.
Wine, well drinks, and hors d'oeuvres served.

$20 suggested donation/person

Community Conversation on Race

Resources, Action, and Initiatives

May 4 marked the culmination of the Community Conversation on Race (CCR), an initiative to improve communication and understanding across racial lines through dialogue. While the program is ending, the spirit of racial reconciliation and bridge-building lives on. Many of the CCR small discussion groups continue to meet. Other group members plan to join Food For Thought Gatherings to continue discussions through "Continuing Conversations on Race" groups or "Potpourri" groups which address a cross-section of issues.

Still others found themselves motivated by their CCR experience to take action. Participants generated a number of strategies to support a pluralistic community. Citizens Project will serve as an organizational contact and reporting mechanism for initiatives and actions which surface through CCR. We also will highlight existing projects that address race relations in Colorado Springs.

Below you will find some of the action ideas generated by CCR participants, as well as participating organizations and programs addressing race that may be resources.

The following lists focus on CCR Participating Organizations, as well as those nonprofits who attended the CCR culminating event, as a starting point. There are many other programs, organizations, and ideas which are not listed here. If we haven't included your organization or program, or if you have ideas you would like included in our next issue please give us a call at 520-9899 and we will try to publish them. We hope to continue linking people with resources to help create community.

CCR Participant Ideas

Student discussion groups on race - One CCR group is organizing to establish discussion groups for high school and college students. Their efforts reflect feedback from many other CCR participants who felt the need to spark safe and productive discussions about race among students. The CCR group will recruit students by forming a speakers bureau to reach out to schools, then serve as facilitators for student discussion groups. In addition, they plan to develop a list of movies that can be used in groups to foster dialogue on race. Contact: Jane Roberts - 632-5912

CCR COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON RACE

Diverse children's play groups Contact: Beth - 579-0458

Human Relations Coalition - The HRC is working on at least three projects that surfaced repeatedly as "solutions steps" in CCR evaluations: 1.) reinstating the City Human Relations Commission, 2.) addressing the Hispanic dropout rate, and 3.) producing Public Service Announcements challenging racism - 477-0130

CCR also sparked discussion among United Way agency executives about considering diversity in the process of identifying and selecting board members.

The following ideas were generated by CCR groups.

* Equip a neighborhood block-party van with grills, coolers, etc., to help neighbors get to know one another.
* Continue community conversations in churches and schools.
* Task force to monitor police treatment of minorities, especially youth.
* Task force to increase participation and opportunities for minorities in government, business, and nonprofits.
* Cultural/art exchanges.
* Make school curricula more inclusive.
* Interracial choir.
* Challenging racist remarks and stereotypes.
* Develop a city and county strategy to improve race relations.
* Exchanges between ethnically diverse congregations.

If you have other ideas or would like to connect with others to work on the above issues please call Citizens Project at 520-9899.

Community Conversation on Race social and civic participating organizations addressing race relations and diversity

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority - Queen Brown, 598-0385
- Black Coalition of Concerned Citizens - Dr. James Sauls, 382-1300
- Citizens Project - Megan Day, Director, 520-9899
- Colorado Indian Chamber of Commerce - Sandy Swenson, Outreach Chair, 488-3858; CICC office, (303) 446-2422
- Colorado Springs Black Chamber of Commerce - James Owens, 574-2222
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority - Debbie Wilson, 632-1543
- Ethnic Minority Studies Program, CU-Springs - Dr. Jose Barrera, 262-3085
- Hispania News - Bob Armendariz, Publisher, 540-0220
- Hispanic Luncheon Club - Ana Marie Ortiz, 385-5933
- Jewish Voices for Justice - Ellene Shapiro, 632-2124
- Korean-American Chamber of Commerce - Marcus S. Hong, 635-3300
- Lone Feather Council - Betty Escobedo, 593-9921
- League of United Latin American Congress (LULAC) - Mary Lucero, 265-7687
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Colorado Springs Branch (NAACP) - William H. Breazell, President, 475-7255
- Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment - Frank Whitworth, 634-1525
- Pikes Peak Human Relations Coalition - Catherine Coulter, Chair, 477-0130
- Pikes Peak Minority Business Foundation - James M. Stewart, 260-9535
- Urban League of the Pikes Peak Region - Jerome Page, President and CEO, 634-1525
- United Students of Color - Jesus Borboa, 533-0626

CCR Participating Organizations of faith

- All Souls Unitarian Church - Elizabeth McMaster, Minister, 633-7717
- First United Methodist Church - Dr. Gerald Trigg, 471-8522

cont. pg.2

Citizens Project
P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Nonprofit Org.
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- New Life Church - Ted Haggard, Senior Pastor, 594-6602
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Church - Father Robert Sullivan, S.J., 633-7204
- Payne Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church - Pastor Jesse Brown, Jr., 591-6271
- People's United Methodist Church - Rev. N. Jorinda Bullitt, Pastor, 473-6872
- Promisekeepers - 328-0667
- Solid Rock Christian Church - Pastor Calvin Johnson, 597-7625
- Temple Shalom - Rabbi Brian Glusman, 634-5511
- The Net - Jann Heinmets, 593-8200
- Woodmen Valley Chapel - Pastor Jim Tomberlin, 599-8652

Programs focusing on ethnic diversity

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Pikes Peak YMCA is a youth mentoring program. According to a recent study, minority mentorees are 70% less likely to use illegal drugs, and 50% less likely to start drinking than their peers who did not have a responsible adult mentor. Big Brothers/Sisters seeks mentors, especially minority and male mentors - 329-7228
- Child Development Center, a program of the Urban League, is a learning and childcare center serving culturally diverse children 2-12 years old - 471-1930
- Colorado Unity, an initiative of the Colorado Progressive Coalition, works to protect affirmative action in CO - (303) 866-0908
- Disproportionate Minority Confinement Task Force addresses the overrepresentation of kids of color in the juvenile justice system. They also provide free diversity training seminars - Magistrate Regina Walter, 448-7566
- The Diversity Coalition, a program of the El Paso County Department of Human Services, works to increase cultural awareness, workplace diversity, and diverse foster and foster-adopt homes and mentors. The coalition hosts monthly cultural events and sponsors a scholarship for Pikes Peak Community College - 444-5529
- Food For Thought Gatherings will host "Continuing Conversations on Race" for CCR participants and anyone interested in small-group dialogue on race - 634-0005
- Minority Opportunities to Strengthen Awareness In Communities (MOSAIC), a program of the Urban League, identifies and fosters leadership opportunities for ethnic minority professionals (age 25-40) through education, networking, and community participation - Alex Chavarria, 634-1525
- Multicultural Achievers Program, a program of the YMCA Downtown Center, connects junior-high-age youth with career, fitness, leadership, and community service opportunities, as well as adult achievers. The program needs volunteers and youth participants - 329-7224
- Tutmose Enrichment and Tutmose Experience programs offer adolescents, especially *students of color, culturally relevant programming* to increase skills, promote healthy development, and foster personal growth - 475-6566

Opportunities: the following organizations, who participated in the CCR culminating event, seek diverse participation in their programs, and representation in their leadership.

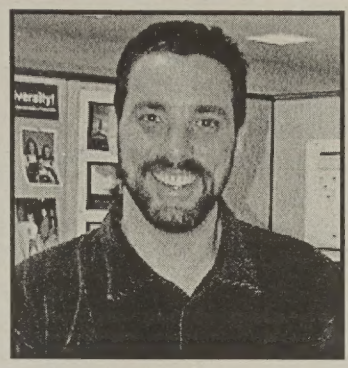
- Alliance for Kids promotes quality, early-childhood education services in El Paso County - PO Box 2692, Colo. Spgs. 80901
- Assets for Youth engages individuals and groups to develop assets with and through children and youth so they grow into responsible, caring, creative adults - 593-YMCA, ext. 243
- Child Care Connections promotes quality child care and provides referrals to licensed child care, community services, and training - 638-2057
- City of Colorado Springs seeks applicants to serve on volunteer city-appointed boards and commissions - Nancy Bramwell, Office of the Mayor, 385-5900
- Colorado Springs Utilities offers their used computers for free and employee volunteer teams for community projects - 668-3804
- Community Health provides health-care services to the under-served and uninsured community - 632-5700
- The Community Mentor Center serves 10 mentoring agencies by providing recruitment, background screening, orientation, and referral for volunteers - 444-5414
- Liberty Heights, a retirement community, seeks a diverse workforce - 481-9494
- Leadership Pikes Peak provides leadership training and develops civic leaders committed to community trusteeship - 632-2618
- Pikes Peak Habitat for Humanity builds homes for low-income families - 475-7800
- Resources for Young Children and Families assists children with disabilities - 577-9190
- Silver Key helps seniors stay in their homes by providing assistance such as meals, transportation, and yard care - 632-1521
- Visually Impaired And Blind Skiers (VIBeS) offers free, guided skiing and other recreation activities for the visually impaired and blind - 328-1300
- Women of Purpose seeks to reconcile and nurture relationships among diverse women for the strengthening of the body of Christ - Alva Wilson, 596-5324

CCR participants: If you would like to continue to receive action updates in Freedom Watch *through the mail, you may join Citizens Project by sending in the coupon on page 4. You may also find* Freedom Watch *inserted in the* Independent *newspaper the last Thursday of each month.* CP

Citizens Project

Hate-Crime Laws Under Attack

A word from board Chair, Richard Conway



Nationwide, efforts are underway to punish perpetrators of bias-based violence through new or expanded hate-crime legislation. The FBI classifies a crime as bias-motivated or a hate crime when it is clear that the offender's actions were motivated, in whole or in part, by prejudice. The recent murders of Oumar Dia, an immigrant from Africa shot by skinheads; James Byrd, an African American man dragged to his death behind a pickup truck in Texas; and Matthew Shepard, a gay college student beaten and left to die in Wyoming, are heinous examples of bias-motivated crimes. While not all hate crimes result in death, victims of bias crimes suffer two to three times as many symptoms of trauma as victims of comparable crimes not involving prejudice.

Last month the Colorado House of Representatives rejected an attempt to add age, disability, and sexual orientation to the existing Ethnic Intimidation law that currently covers crimes committed because of race, color, ancestry, religion, and national origin. "It saddens and horrifies me," said Equality Colorado Executive Director Sue Anderson, "that Colorado legislators can't say that hate crimes based on age, disability or sexual orientation should be punished like other hate crimes in this state."

Groups like Colorado For Family Values (CFV) and Focus on the Family continue to fight against hate-crimes legislation. CFV claims hate-crime legislation will "turn our government into thought police, dilute the legal seriousness of so-called 'ordinary' crimes, and quietly make homosexuality a de-facto minority group."

The fact is that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act would punish acts of violence, not speech.

In an extreme lapse of judgment and good taste, CFV is using Matthew Shepard's tragic death in a fundraising appeal to help defeat an expansion of hate-crime legislation. CFV believes that Shepard's senseless killing has received enormous media attention because the "homosexual lobby is ... advancing their agenda ... of injecting themselves into the list of protected groups ... alongside legitimate ethnic minorities."

Focus on the Family Vice President Tom Minnery argued in a letter to state lawmakers prior to the Colorado bill's defeat, that the courts could have interpreted the bill as providing legal protection to "pedophilia, necrophilia, bestiality, etc."

At the national level, the proposed Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 has 35 co-sponsors in the Senate. The proposal would expand existing protections to cover gender, disability status, and sexual orientation, and make it easier for federal authorities to prosecute hate crimes when state or local authorities cannot or will not.

The Washington-based Family Research Council – at one time a project of Focus on the Family – sent an "action alert" to FRC members with fabricated claims about the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. The alert falsely stated that "Hate crimes legislation could severely restrict Americans' freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of religion." FRC goes on to claim that "This legislation would give the government the power to interpret and classify certain speech, thought, theology, and moral belief as unlawful or contributing to crime." The fact is that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act would punish acts of violence, not speech. Under the Act crimes must involve force to be considered hate crimes.

Another FRC deception: "Hate crimes legislation could give priority to homosexuals as being more protected victims than other victims of crime." In reality, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act does not create a category of "more protected victims." It simply addresses the fact that state and local authorities sometimes cannot or will not prosecute violent crimes committed against gays and lesbians." The Act would allow federal authorities to intervene in order to bring the perpetrators of these horrible crimes to justice.

The FRC deceptions go on and on, but one fact remains: the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 offers greater protection to individuals historically victimized because of their identity. If you're fed up with senseless crimes motivated by prejudice, write your elected officials in the US House of Representatives and Senate and urge their support of the Hate Crimes Prevention Action of 1999.

(FRC information provided by People for the American Way)

Gay Teens Face Harassment at School

Local teens' experience mirrors national problem

Harassed Students Sue California School District

After years of harassment, and school administrators turning their backs, a group of teens in Live Oak, California have joined forces to sue their school district. Alana Flores of Morgan Hill, California and five former and current Live Oak students have filed a federal civil rights lawsuit claiming they were victim to "pervasive, severe, and unwelcome" verbal and physical anti-gay harassment on a nearly daily basis. School administration, they say, "repeatedly failed to take appropriate and necessary measures to stop [it]." The plaintiffs argue that the sheer size of the school population (2000 students) contributes to an environment that is divisive, factionalized, and violent.

According to *Teacher Magazine*, during her first year at Live Oak, Alana received a note in her locker that read; "Die, dyke bitch." Later, other kids began yelling at her across the school central quad, calling her "faggot dyke." One day another student handed her a picture of a man and a woman having sexual intercourse and said, "This is how you guys should be doing it, fag."

Teachers saw the harassment, says Flores, but did nothing. "Say 'nigger,' and you'll get busted; call someone a 'faggot' or 'dyke' and teachers will turn away or refer to it as common teasing. Most just don't want the hassle; others will acknowledge that they are homophobic, that they don't like gays and lesbians. A few are sympathetic but afraid to take a stand. Once during a dance performance, the student body chanted, 'faggot, faggot.' The dance teacher gave us a hug after the performance, but no one did anything at the time. People are afraid to do anything that shows tolerance."

Alana received a note in her locker that read; "Die, dyke bitch."

Local teens face similar harassment

Teenagers in Colorado Springs are not strangers to harassment based on sexual orientation. Inside/Out is a youth support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered teens that meets once a week at the Pride Center in Colorado Springs. Members of Inside/Out have much to say about harassment of gay teens at school.

"I had a friend who was the band conductor at my school and was openly gay. When he walked on the field during football games, kids would scream 'faggot,'" says one local high school student.

A female member of Inside/Out, who did not reveal her sexual orientation to classmates, was called a "dyke" in high school because she was athletic and played on the softball team.

One of the group members talked to a guidance counselor at his high school in Colorado Springs about starting a support club for gays and bisexuals. The counselor said it was impossible: the administration would never allow it.

Administration rejects Palmer gay/straight club

In January students at Palmer High School, led by freshman Delores Garcia, asked to form a Gay/Straight Alliance club to talk about issues facing gay and lesbian teens. Palmer Principal Jay Engeln refused their request, explaining to a *Gazette* reporter that, "we don't have any non-curricular clubs at Palmer High School. If I said yes to one group, such as this club, how would I legally be able to say no to another club, say a hate group?"

Mark Silverstein, Colorado Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, challenged Engeln's interpretation of the law on behalf of the students in a letter to School district 11. The letter cited court rulings that affirm students' rights to "engage other students in open discourse on issues they deem important."

Silverstein pointed out that School District 11 policies in fact support Garcia's request. District 11 policy states that "The Board of Education endorses the creation of clubs and other approved school organizations for the purpose of reaching as many students as possible." Elsewhere, District 11 policy states student groups should "establish aims which are of school interest or community interest." Palmer recognizes other clubs which appear non-curricular such as the Chess Club and Peer Council.

At the very least, Palmer is bound by the Equal Access Act, to make school facilities available to the group. The Act, which also ensures student religious groups treatment equal to that of other non-curricular groups, states it is "unlawful for any public secondary school ... to deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings."

Delores and her peers seek school endorsement of the club, however, including a faculty advisor and the right to meet during school hours.

Schools around the state are dealing with problems of harassment in various ways. Denver's East High School established the state's first gay-straight alliance club. In Boulder, there is the Open and Affirming Sexual Orientation Support Group, a program for teens administered through the health department. In February, Boulder Valley School District moved to help protect gay students by expanding their anti-harassment policy to include sexual orientation. This motion was strongly opposed by fundamentalists in the district.

The outcome of the Alliance Club at Palmer is undecided but some Inside/Out members are optimistic that harassment based on sexual orientation is on the decline.

One member noticed a change since the Columbine shootings. "People are much more careful about what they say, especially negative comments." Another member optimistically remarked, "I think it's getting better. There needs to be more education and some type of first step, like a diversity council. It will get better from there." CP

Inside Out

Youth Hotline
719-328-1056

Newsbriefs

Flag burning ban?

For the fourth time in ten years some members of Congress are trying to amend the Constitution to ban burning the American Flag. Burning the flag is a rare act, and currently falls under the freedom of speech protected by the first amendment. The amendment faces an uphill battle in the House and a close vote in the Senate. If the proposed amendment were to pass it would produce a dangerous erosion of our fundamental freedoms.

Swastikas burned

On the weekend of February 19 two swastikas were burned into school lawns in Denver; one at Slavens Elementary School and the other between Corey Elementary and Merril Middle School. While the damage was cleaned before school the following Monday, the incident still caused alarm for parents and students.

Florida bill would allow majority prayer in school

In Florida, House Bill 1773 going before the House Judiciary Committee would allow public schools to have "inspirational messages," and "a prayer of invocation" during noncompulsory activities, if a majority of students participating in the activity requested it.

"This bill would pit students of different faiths against each other," said People For The American Way President Carole Shields. "It is a perfect example of why the Founders got it right when they said government should not be entangled with religion."

Senate passes school prayer proposal

On May 18, Senator Wayne Allard (R-Colo.) succeeded in passing an amendment to the juvenile justice bill to promote worship and religious symbols in public schools where slayings occur. The measure, co-sponsored by Sens. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Michael B. Enzi (R-Wyo.), allows religious music and the reading of scripture and prayers by school officials at public school memorial services in addition to allowing religious symbols in permanent public school memorials. Allard included a provision requiring that a U.S. attorney general be made available to represent a school district defending the legality of a religious memorial service.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State criticized the amendment saying, "school-sponsored religious displays and worship invariably make some students feel like second-class citizens." He added that iin a pluralistic society, this proposal would divide students, not bring them together.

Quotes of Note

"I have yet to hear James Dobson weigh in on social justice issues ... Dobson's efforts have been traditional, hard-ball, inside-the-[Republican]-party kind of stuff. He's totally partisan."

– Jim Wallis, editor of Sojourners, *and head of the Christian group, Call for Renewal*

Citizens Project

Here Comes the Posse

Excerpted from *Voices of Hate, The Far Right on Short-wave*

by James Latham

One of the most radical right groups using short-wave radio is the Posse Comitatus (Latin meaning "power to the county.") The Posse, while having many like-minded listeners and radio hosts, has only one programmer: Christian Identity preacher James P. Wickstrom. His program *The End Day Prophecy Hour* is heard nightly from 6 to 7 p.m. Central Time over militia-run Republic Radio Network. This, in turn, is broadcast over far-right short-wave station WGTG, McCaysville, Georgia on 5085 KHz. WGTG is owned by David Franz, who has taken to the airwaves on occasion spouting homophobic joke binges to his willing callers. It's not surprising that the militia would become a conduit for the Posse, as in many respects, the Posse Comitatus was a precursor to the modern-day militia movement.

The Posse had its beginnings in 1969 with Portland, Oregon retired businessman Henry L. Beach. Beach's right-wing political roots extend back to the '30s when he served as state liaison with William Pelly's Silver Legion, more commonly known as Silver Shirts (a vicious anti-Semitic, pro-Hitler organization formed in the United States in 1933.) Typical Posse doctrine dictates that the supreme law of the land is the locally elected Sheriff.

"The Sheriff of their respected [sic] Counties have the authority to deputize all males of their County, 15 years of age and older ... The Sheriff is to be obeyed and respected ONLY if he is a GOD fearing believer and son of Yahshua/Christ ... If you find that your Sheriff is in default of this, then he is to be removed from office by whatever means necessary ... " (From the Posse Comitatus web page: http://www.posse-comitatus.org/)

The Posse grew in power and influence during the early '80s, largely in the Midwest during the farm crisis. At its peak, Posse membership was estimated between 12,000 and 50,000. Today, Posse membership is considerably reduced as a result of several factors, including Posse leaders serving prison terms, several fatal shoot-outs with authorities, and finally, the emergence of militias.

While not all the Posse membership has been racist or anti-Semitic, there has been a great influence from racist Christian Identity leaders such as James P. Wickstrom. Wickstrom, who only recently came on short-wave in force, serves as the director of the Posse Comitatus of the United States. In 1991 he was convicted on charges of plotting to distribute $100,000 in counterfeit bills to fellow attendees at the 1988 Aryan Nations World Congress. He was released from prison in 1994.

The programming topics on Wickstrom's *The End Day Prophecy Hour* revolve around conspiracy themes often heard on militia programs: US military detention camps, TWA flight 800, jets overflying US cities spraying who knows what, and of late, the Y2K computer shutdown. According to Wickstrom, these problems are due to a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. As is often the case with far-right radio hosts, Wickstrom stokes the coals of hatred with his listeners.

Wickstrom: "Do you believe ... federal agencies working in cohesion with foreign governments are diabolical enough to bring biological chemical weapons against the masses in the United States?"

Caller: "Their goal is to exterminate every Caucasian on the face of the earth."

Wickstrom: "This is international Jewry at its best, isn't it?"

(From a radio broadcast on WGTG in January, 1999)

Prior to broadcasting on WGTG, Wickstrom had some play on a few AM stations (the most notable was KTTL radio in Dodge City, Kansas (and a significant tape distribution. How Wickstrom will fare on short-wave is yet to be seen. Sadly, hate radio on short-wave has not showed any signs of slowing down. CP

TOWN MEETING VI

The Pros and Cons: Reconfiguration of County Commissioner Districts in El Paso County

PANEL:
- Larry Kallenberger, Executive Director, Colorado Counties, Inc.
- Chuck Brown, Commissioner, District 3, Chairman, El Paso Board of County Commissioners
- Betty Beedy, Commissioner, District 2, El Paso Board of County Commissioners

When: 9:30 - 11:30 a.m., Saturday, June 26, 1999

Where: Hillside Community Center, Corner of Fountain Boulevard and Institute St.

Moderator: Alfred W. Metzger, Jr.

Lead Sponsor: Committee for Responsible County Government

Co-Sponsors: Citizens Project; Jewish Voices for Justice; Colorado Springs, Osteopathic Foundation and Family Medicine Center; Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado; Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains; Urban League of the Pikes Peak Region.

For additional Information, please call: 576-5299

You can make a difference

JOIN CITIZENS PROJECT

Your voice for tolerance in the Pikes Peak region.

Citizens Project ...

- Reports on news and views in *Freedom Watch*
- Organizes campaigns, workshops, and events
- Sponsors candidate surveys and forums
- Monitors and informs on legislative and other issues

... and more

❑ Yes, I'd like to join Citizens Project! Enclosed is my membership contribution of $25 or more.

❑ I'm already a member, but I'm ready to do more! Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $25 ❑ $50 ❑ $75 ❑ $120 ❑ Other: $_____

(All members receive a postage-paid subscription to Freedom Watch.*)*

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Box 2085
Colo. Spgs., CO 80901

Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

Citizens Project

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